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AP News

Suicide attack kills 2 NATO troops in Afghanistan

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A suicide attack Tuesday at a joint NATO-Afghan base in eastern Afghanistan killed two international service members and wounded several others, the military alliance said.

The attack in remote Khost province near the Pakistan border was on a compound used by both international forces and the Afghan Border Police, NATO said.

Residents in the province's Ali Shir district said they heard a large blast at the base after dark.

A NATO statement later said that two international troops were killed and several others wounded. It gave no further details, but said an investigation was under way.

The suicide assault in the east came hours after visiting U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates toured an area of southern Afghanistan where international forces recently drove out Taliban insurgents.

Aiming to show progress in the expanded war against insurgents in south Afghanistan, Gates took a brief, heavily guarded walk Tuesday down a rutted street in Now Zad, retaken only late last year by international forces in the first significant military push following President Barack Obama's decision to add 30,000 troops to combat Taliban gains.

Tuesday's suicide attack was along the porous Pakistan border, about 25 miles (40 kilometers) east of Khost city, the provincial capital.

A resident who lives near the international base, Sayed Gul, told The Associated Press he heard a large explosion just after sunset.

"There was a big shockwave," Gul said. "After that, two helicopters came."

He said he watched both helicopters land in the area of the base and then fly back toward Khost city, the provincial capital.

On Monday, international and Afghan forces in Khost city repelled an insurgent attack on provincial government headquarters, NATO said.

Khost's rugged mountains are dominated by the Haqqani network, an al-Qaida-linked Afghan Taliban faction blamed for the Dec. 30 suicide bombing of a CIA base in Khost city that killed seven of the agency's employees.